

St Mary's CofE (VA) Primary School

Stoney Lane, Kidderminster, DY10 2LX

Inspection dates 23–24 June 2015

Overall effectiveness	Previous inspection:	Requires improvement	3
	This inspection:	Requires improvement	3
Leadership and management		Requires improvement	3
Behaviour and safety of pupils		Good	2
Quality of teaching		Requires improvement	3
Achievement of pupils		Requires improvement	3
Early years provision		Requires improvement	3

Summary of key findings for parents and pupils

This is a school that requires improvement. It is not good because

- Not enough pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics, especially in Key Stage 2. This means that they are not making up for weaker learning in previous years, and standards remain below average in some year groups.
- Pupils have gaps in learning which are not successfully addressed in some classes. On other occasions, teachers do not move pupils on to more challenging tasks quickly enough to speed up their progress.
- Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their literacy skills in different subjects.
- The progress children make in the early years is improving, but some still do not make as much progress as they are capable of. Teachers do not plan outdoor activities as effectively as those in the classroom.
- There is no clear procedure for parents of children in the early years to share their children's successes at home with the school. This means that staff do not have a full picture of how children's skills are developing in different situations.
- Some leaders' assessments of how well pupils are doing are not accurate enough. This means that they cannot use the data effectively to drive improvements in their areas of responsibility.
- The governing body does not have a clear method for ensuring that all the areas identified as requiring improvement are systematically checked. Consequently, it has not looked closely enough at the school's progress towards achieving some of its agreed priorities.
- Governors do not routinely seek the views of parents in order to take them into account when improving the school.

The school has the following strengths

- The headteacher has introduced changes which have improved the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school.
- She has ensured that pupils' behaviour has improved and they feel safe.
- Pupils behave well in lessons and around school.
- Pupils make good progress in reading, writing and mathematics in Key Stage 1.
- The school's values and drive to 'Dream, Believe, Achieve' supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness particularly well.
- The school is improving pupils' well-being by increasing participation in physical activities and ensuring high-quality school lunches which promote healthy eating.

Information about this inspection

- The inspectors observed pupils' learning in 14 lessons, six of which they observed together with the headteacher.
- The inspection team held meetings with the headteacher and other staff, two groups of pupils, eight governors and a representative of the local authority.
- The inspectors talked to pupils and looked at pupils' work, listened to pupils read and checked information on attendance.
- There were insufficient current responses to Ofsted's online questionnaire Parent View to display results and the school had no recent parental questionnaires, but inspectors spoke informally to parents at the start of the school day. They also took account of the 23 completed staff questionnaires.
- The inspectors observed the school's work and reviewed a range of documentation including: the school's checks on its performance; its analysis and tracking of pupils' progress; records of behaviour and safety; school improvement plans; records relating to classroom observations and the management of staff performance; safeguarding arrangements; and records of meetings of the governing body.

Inspection team

Susan Hughes, Lead inspector

Additional Inspector

Shahnaz Maqsood

Additional Inspector

Full report

Information about this school

- The school is smaller than the average-sized primary school.
- Children in the early years start in a part-time Nursery class in the term in which they are three or in the year in which they are four. Most then move to a full-time Reception class at the beginning of the year in which they are five, where they are joined by children from other nurseries and pre-schools.
- Most pupils are White British. The proportion of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds is below average and a below-average proportion of pupils speak English as an additional language.
- The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs is above average.
- The proportion of disadvantaged pupils supported by the pupil premium, which is additional government funding for pupils who are known to be eligible for free school meals or looked after by the local authority, is well above average.
- The headteacher joined the school in March 2014. The leaders of literacy and the early years took up their posts of responsibility in September 2014; the leader of mathematics took up her post in April 2015. Six new teachers joined the school between September 2014 and January 2015, and a family support worker was appointed in May 2015.
- The governors have reviewed their governing body structure in readiness for a reorganised governing body to start in September 2015.
- The school works with the Burlish Park Teaching School Alliance, which provides training for staff.
- The school meets the government's current floor standards, which set the minimum expectations for pupils' attainment and progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of Year 6.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching to raise standards by:
 - making sure that teachers' assessments of pupils' learning in lessons are accurate enough to help them set work that fills gaps in pupils' knowledge
 - giving pupils more opportunities to practise their literacy skills in different subjects
 - ensuring that pupils are quickly moved on to the next steps in their learning to help them make more rapid progress.
- Improve provision in the early years by:
 - making sure that outdoor activities develop children's skills as effectively as those planned for indoors
 - providing more opportunities for parents to contribute to their children's record of learning and development, and ensure that the records clearly show how well their children are doing.
- Strengthen leadership and management by:
 - ensuring subject leaders accurately assess how well pupils are doing and use this information to drive improvements in their areas of responsibility
 - developing effective ways for the governing body to communicate with parents so that they take their views into account when improving the school
 - ensuring that the governing body systematically checks that all agreed actions for improvement are being effective in raising standards.

Inspection judgements

The leadership and management requires improvement

- Assessments made by leaders in the past have not been accurate. This has hindered their ability to drive improvements. Their assessments are now becoming more accurate, but this has not yet improved pupils' achievement across all areas of the school. Some leaders are very new to the role and have not been in post long enough to have made a significant difference to pupils' learning.
- The headteacher's assessments of how well pupils are doing are accurate, and she rigorously checks pupils' progress to see where this is not as rapid as it could be. Where pupils are identified as falling behind, support is provided to help them catch up.
- The vision and drive of the headteacher is improving the quality of teaching, pupils' achievement, their behaviour and safety. She has accurately identified how the school needs to improve. The changes she has made to the school's organisation, and the way lessons are taught, are successfully raising standards.
- Effective partnerships with other local schools are helping teachers and leaders develop their skills. The Burlish Park Teaching School Alliance runs courses which staff attend. Other local partnerships of schools meet to provide opportunities for leaders to check the accuracy of their assessments and to share expertise.
- The appraisal system, which only rewards teachers with a pay rise if their pupils achieve well, is used more effectively than in the past and is helping to improve the quality of teaching. Teachers know what leaders expect of them. Leaders hold them accountable for how well their pupils are doing and provide support to help teachers achieve their challenging targets.
- The pupil premium is used effectively for most disadvantaged pupils. Additional teachers and other adults are employed so that teaching groups are small. The school provides one-to-one help when needed so that disadvantaged pupils can keep up with their peers.
- The school supports disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs increasingly successfully. In recent months, more-accurate assessment means that support is better suited to the pupils' individual learning needs. Variations in the quality of teaching, however, mean that some pupils make more rapid progress than others, especially in writing.
- The school uses the primary physical education and sport premium well. A skilled coach is employed to provide high-quality sports lessons and help teachers develop their own physical education teaching techniques. The money also pays for a range of sports clubs, such as archery, tag rugby and dry slope skiing. As a result, more pupils are taking part in physical activities. This, and the exceptionally good lunches which promote healthy eating, are improving pupils' well-being and promoting a healthy lifestyle.
- The subjects pupils learn are interesting, and pupils speak animatedly about topics such as 'Beachcombers' and 'Tomorrow's World'. Not all teachers, however, use this enthusiasm to help pupils' develop their writing skills. They do not provide enough opportunities for pupils to practise in other subjects the skills they learn in literacy lessons.
- Parents told inspectors that there are more opportunities for them to be involved with the school than in previous years. Pupils and parents drew up the school values after discussing which would be most appropriate. Each half term, a value is the focus of assemblies and class discussions. Pupils fill 'pebble jars' when anyone is witnessed acting in accordance with the current value. This led to interesting discussions about why the 'kindness' jar seemed to have more pebbles than the 'respect' one, and how this could be addressed. Such activities help pupils to understand the practical meaning of the values and supports their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development especially well.
- Pupils learn about other religions, and pupils readily talk about their different faiths and cultures. Pupils told the inspectors that they appreciate and respect each other's beliefs. In lessons, they reflect on questions such as 'What is a soul? Do we have one?', 'What is the different between a wish and a prayer?'

and 'What is God?' They learn to express their views and listen to the views of others.

- Pupils understand about democracy and the rule of law. Recent elections of the school council and to elect a head boy and head girl gave them a practical taste of how democracy works. Pupils maturely spoke about how it feels to be unsuccessful in an election but agreed that it is a fair method. Such experiences prepare them well for life in modern, multicultural Britain.
- The school is committed to tackling discrimination and ensure equality of opportunity for all pupils. The headteacher has identified where pupils do not achieve as well as they should and ensured that changes to address inequality in teaching and learning opportunities are effective.
- Leaders ensure that the school's safeguarding arrangements meet all statutory requirements. All staff are well trained and make sure that any concerns about pupils' well-being are immediately reported and diligently followed up. Posters in every classroom and around school ensure that all staff and visitors know who to go to if they have a concern.
- The school has been well supported by the local authority since the previous inspection. The local authority has provided training and development opportunities for teachers and leaders.
- **The governance of the school:**
 - Governors are very supportive. They have had a review of governance and they have drawn on this to improve the way they work. Governors visit the school to check how it is doing and report their findings to the rest of the governing body. The systems for checking on progress, however, are not as well organised as they could be. Governors currently rely on individuals to initiate visits as they feel appropriate and there is no overall plan to make sure that all areas are checked equally well.
 - Governors are becoming increasingly confident in using school achievement data to track the progress of different groups of pupils. They have attended a number of training sessions to make sure that they keep abreast of changes in education and develop the skills they need to effectively challenge leaders. Governors ask probing questions of school leaders to make sure they are improving the school.
 - Governors are using the appraisal system more effectively to reward good teaching and ensure that weaker teaching is helped to improve. They understand that the quality of teaching is strengthening, but is still variable across the school.
 - Governors check that the pupil premium is being used effectively in supporting disadvantaged pupils to keep up with their classmates. Governors appreciate that primary physical education and sport premium is successfully enabling more pupils to take part in physical activities.
 - While governors' increasing presence in school enables them to meet and talk to more parents, they do not have a method for checking regularly how the majority of parents feel about the school

The behaviour and safety of pupils are good

Behaviour

- The behaviour of pupils is good. Pupils are polite and helpful to adults and each other, readily supporting classmates in lessons. They move around school calmly. Older pupils told inspectors that they should be good role models for younger ones.
- Pupils told the inspectors that behaviour has improved over the past year. They attribute this to the new system of rewards and consequences, which works well. Pupils eagerly strive to gain 'e-praises', which are points recorded electronically by staff when pupils have worked hard, behaved well or done something to be proud of. The points gathered on the 'e-praise' website can be checked by pupils in school or by pupils and parents on their own computers at home, and prizes are awarded according to how many are gained.
- From the start of the early years, and throughout the school, pupils are enthusiastic about their learning. Even if the teaching is weaker, most pupils try hard in lessons. Any who lose concentration do not disrupt others and are quickly refocused when teachers provide work that helps them to progress.
- A few pupils who find behaving well difficult are supported by sensitive adults who consistently apply the

school's behaviour policy. This enables pupils to understand the school's expectations. Their behaviour improves, as they appreciate the value of the rewards system.

- Pupils told inspectors that they feel their views are listened to and they enjoy being able to make decisions. For example, they voted on the names for their new school rabbits 'Nibbles' and 'John', and enjoy helping to look after them and all the other animals.
- Pupils readily take on roles of responsibility, such as being playground friends, members of the 'Worship Crew', the 'Eco Group' or the school council. Pupils appreciate that the way people are chosen for different jobs is fair. Some are democratically elected, while others require pupils to apply and go through an interview and selection process. Pupils all agreed that anyone who abuses their role of responsibility should lose the privilege of doing it.
- The school works closely with parents to improve attendance and punctuality. For example, the recently appointed family worker helps families create appropriate morning routines to ensure that pupils arrive prepared and on time. As a result, attendance is gradually improving and is currently much closer to average than in previous years.

Safety

- The school's work to keep pupils safe and secure is good. Pupils told the inspectors that they feel safe in school because teachers and other adults look after them well. One pupil commented, 'The teachers care about us.'
- Pupils understand what bullying is and the different forms it can take, such as physical, verbal and cyber-bullying. They told inspectors that there is now very little bullying in school. All pupils who spoke to inspectors were confident that any incidents are dealt with well by teachers. They all felt that, if they had a problem, there was someone in school they could go to and it would be sorted out.
- Pupils know how to keep themselves safe beyond school. For example, they know about how to use the internet safely. Pupils explained to the inspectors why precautions are necessary and showed a mature understanding of potential hazards related to social media and internet usage.
- Pupils told the inspectors that they have regular fire drills in school and also know about fire safety in their homes. They explained how fire safety officers had taught them to 'get down low and go, go, go' to escape from a room which is on fire.
- All pupils learn about water safety. Older pupils learn how to stay safe when riding their bikes. Pupils in Year 6 commented that the recent visit from a Childline representative was interesting and helpful.

The quality of teaching

requires improvement

- Some teachers do not accurately assess how well pupils are doing in lessons. They do not all identify where pupils have gaps in their knowledge caused by weaker teaching in the past. Consequently, these gaps are not addressed sufficiently.
- On occasions, when they have completed their tasks, pupils have to wait before being set challenging work which will help them make more rapid progress.
- The way writing is taught is improving. New systems to check what pupils already know, and then identify what they need to learn over the coming days, are becoming embedded throughout the school. Some teachers give pupils additional opportunities to practise the newly acquired skills when writing in different subjects, but this is not the case in all classes.
- The way mathematics is taught is similarly improving. Exercises to identify where pupils have gaps in their learning before starting a new topic are being used by all staff. However, some teachers are more adept than others at planning and setting work to address the gaps.

- Where teaching is particularly effective, pupils are given practical opportunities to use their mathematical skills in practical situations. For example, during the inspection, pupils in Year 6 tackled a mathematics problem around numbers of cows in a field. They drew grids on the playground and then used markers to represent cows which could move from 'field to field' until the pupils identified suitable strategies for solving the problem.
- Reading is taught well. Phonics (the sounds letters represent in words) are taught from the Reception class and through Key Stage 1. Good routines and repetitions help pupils establish secure understanding of phonics which they use in reading unfamiliar words and in their writing. The recently introduced system for pupils to select reading books has generated enthusiasm for reading. Pupils enjoy completing online quizzes about the book they have just read before choosing from the wide range of books available to them. Parents can check at home how well their children are progressing and what books are suitable for their children's reading ages.
- Disadvantaged pupils, disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs are appropriately supported by additional adults in lessons, in small groups or on a one-to-one basis. Adults are well briefed so that they understand the learning that is to take place. The quality of their support, however, varies according to the quality of guidance they are given by the teachers. Consequently, these pupils' progress varies throughout the school: only some make good progress.
- The most-able pupils make similarly variable progress. When the teaching is good, they achieve well and many are working above the levels expected for their age. A legacy of weaker teaching, however, means that some pupils, especially those in Years 4 and 5, are working well below the level expected for their age and are not attaining the high levels of which they are capable.
- Teaching in Key Stage 1 has improved since the previous inspection. Teaching in these classes is good because teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve. For example, pupils in Years 1 explained to an inspector that they had used an apostrophe in the word 'I'm' because it replaced the letter 'a'. Although they had difficulty pronouncing the word 'apostrophe', the pupils demonstrated clear understanding of how to use it.

The achievement of pupils

requires improvement

- A legacy of poor achievement in the past means that many pupils in Key Stage 2 are working at levels below those expected for their age. While the progress that pupils make is improving, it is not consistently good across all classes. For example, pupils in Year 5 have made good progress, narrowing what was previously a considerable gap between their attainment and that expected for their age. The progress of pupils in Year 4, however, has not been rapid enough since the beginning of the school year to make a significant difference to their attainment.
- In 2014, standards at the end of Key Stage 2 were broadly average. The test results indicated that pupils had made good progress since Key Stage 1, but this was mainly due to small-group teaching and accelerated progress in their final year. Their progress in earlier years had been less rapid. Pupils currently in Year 6 have made good progress since September 2014 and are working at broadly average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- In 2014, disadvantaged pupils were nearly three and a half terms behind their classmates in mathematics, four terms behind in reading and nearly three terms behind in writing. In relation to other pupils nationally, they were three terms behind in mathematics and just over two terms behind in reading and writing. However, this is not typical of pupils currently in the school. With better-focused and more effective use of the pupil premium, disadvantaged pupils are making at least as much progress as their peers, and in some cases better. This is greatly narrowing any gaps between their attainment and that of other pupils.
- Pupils typically start in Key Stage 1 with below-average standards in reading, writing and mathematics, and they remained below average at the end of Key Stage 1 in 2014. Pupils currently in the key stage

have made exceptionally good progress this year. They are working confidently at average standards, and some are working at above-average standards. The most recent check on how well pupils in Year 1 understand phonics is just below average, but is improving year on year.

- Most disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs make similar, variable progress to that of their classmates. Some, however, achieve slightly less well in writing when they do not have enough opportunities to practise their skills regularly.
- The most-able pupils make good progress in Key Stage 1 and in some year groups in Key Stage 2. However, this is not consistent across all classes. The most-able pupils in Year 6 are working at above-average standards. Some pupils completed the highest level end-of-year tests this year.

The early years provision

requires improvement

- Children start in the early years classes with skills that are weaker than those typical for their age, especially their reading, writing and social skills. Children's achievement in the Nursery and Reception classes is improving, and an increasing proportion are attaining a good level of development. However, this is still below average.
- Teaching requires improvement because outdoor learning activities are not as well planned to develop children's skills as those indoors. Consequently, outdoor learning is less successful and children's skills are not developed as rapidly as they could be.
- Leadership of the early years requires improvement because, while children's progress is tracked, records to show how well they are doing are not well organised and do not clearly demonstrate the progress children make. While parents are encouraged to tell teachers about their children's interests and achievements when they start school, there are few opportunities for them to contribute to the record of their achievements throughout the year. This means that the school does not always have a full picture of how children's skills are developing in different situations.
- Teachers and other adult in the early years classes work well to create a happy, safe environment for children to learn. As a result, children behave well and quickly settle in. They soon learn the class routines and start to develop enquiring minds and positive attitudes to learning.
- Children are prepared effectively for their move to Key Stage 1. While the proportion of those who achieve a good level of development is below average, children's positive attitudes to learning help them become enthusiastic learners in Year 1.

What inspection judgements mean

School	Grade	Judgement	Description
	Grade 1	Outstanding	An outstanding school is highly effective in delivering outcomes that provide exceptionally well for all its pupils' needs. This ensures that pupils are very well equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 2	Good	A good school is effective in delivering outcomes that provide well for all its pupils' needs. Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education, training or employment.
	Grade 3	Requires improvement	A school that requires improvement is not yet a good school, but it is not inadequate. This school will receive a full inspection within 24 months from the date of this inspection.
	Grade 4	Inadequate	<p>A school that has serious weaknesses is inadequate overall and requires significant improvement but leadership and management are judged to be Grade 3 or better. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p> <p>A school that requires special measures is one where the school is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the school's leaders, managers or governors have not demonstrated that they have the capacity to secure the necessary improvement in the school. This school will receive regular monitoring by Ofsted inspectors.</p>

School details

Unique reference number	135057
Local authority	Worcestershire
Inspection number	462528

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Voluntary aided
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	195
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Alan Wombell
Headteacher	Sarah Perrett
Date of previous school inspection	4 July 2013
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